



bottomland forests

Characteristics

Bottomland or floodplain forests are densely forested riparian areas located along major rivers and streams areas in the riparian area (land adjacent to the water). They may or may not have continuously standing water. If it is frequently flooded the understory may be very open with rotten logs and woody debris covering the forest floor. If floods are less frequent, the forest floor may have a variety of annual and perennial plants. The tree species that live here have root systems that can tolerate flooding for long periods of time. Most bottomland tree species are shade intolerant and must have full sun for seedlings to grow. Due to the abundant amount of moisture and rich alluvial soils (soils that develop when sediments settle after annual flooding) bottomland tree species grow very rapidly, as much as six feet a year. Iowa has approximately 700,000 acres of bottomland forestland, with the majority of it in private ownership.

Recreation

Hiking, hunting, trapping, wildlife observation and/or photography

What Lives Here?

Trees, shrubs, and vines are characteristic plants in bottomland forests. Trees include silver maple, pin oak, sycamore, cottonwood, willows, boxelder, swamp white oak, and river birch. Nettle, wild grape, Virginia creeper, and poison ivy often are found under the trees. Many animals use this habitat year-round while others move through during migration. Cavity nesting birds find plenty of dead trees in bottomland forests.

Organisms found in this CD:

American toad, American woodcock, anabaena, aquatic sowbug, big brown bat, black willow, blue-spotted salamander, blue skullcap, bobcat, box elder, bulrush, buttonbush, cardinal flower, central newt, chara, chlorella, clearweed, common yellowthroat, Cope's gray treefrog, copperhead, cottonwood, coyote, crane fly, cricket frog, devil crayfish, deer fly, diamondback water snake, diatoms, dragonfly, earthworm, eastern cottontail, eastern hognose snake, eastern mole, eastern phoebe, eastern pipistrelle, ermine, euglena, evening bat, false nettle, fisher spider, Fowler's toad, fox snake, fox squirrel, Graham's crayfish snake, gray fox, gray treefrog, great plains toad, hoary bat, hooded merganser, horse fly, Indiana bat, Keen's myotis, least shrew, least weasel, leech, little brown bat, long-tailed weasel, Louisiana waterthrush, masked shrew, massasauga, meadow jumping mouse, microcystis, mink, mosquito, Norway rat, pileated woodpecker, pin oak, plains garter snake, planaria, prothonotary warbler, protozoa, pygmy shrew, raccoon, red bat, red-sided and eastern garter snakes, red-shouldered hawk, red squirrel, short-tailed shrew, silver maple, skunk cabbage, smallmouth salamander, smooth earth snake, speckled kingsnake, spirogyra, spotted touch-me-not, spring peeper, swamp buttercup, sycamore, tiger salamander, Virginia opossum, volvox, water mites, water parsnip, white-footed mouse, white-tailed deer, wild millet, winterberry, wood turtle, woodchuck, Woodhouse's toad, woodland vole, yellow-crowned night-heron, yellow ironweed, yellow mud turtle, yellow warbler

Locations in Iowa

Bottomland forests are timbered areas bordering rivers and streams. They are found throughout Iowa. Our largest expanses of bottomland timber are along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and larger interior rivers.

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.